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On the Integration of Positive Psychology and the Psychology/ Spirituality: Logical, Normative, and Methodological Questions

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Chapter 3
On the Integration of Positive Psychology and the Psychology of Religion/Spirituality: Logical, Normative, and Methodological Questions

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In one way or another, every human person lives out answers to four fundamental questions of human existence: What is real? What is the good life? What does it mean to be a good person? And, how does one become a good person? Even if one's answers are that there are no right answers, that will surely manifest in one's life. Others may be absolutely certain they have arrived at *the* truth regarding these matters, and perhaps in part due to that certainty, their answers can lead to a lack of empathy for those who disagree. Still, there will be persons who find their way into a vision of reality, the good life, the good person, and the process of becoming a good person that strike many as beautiful and compelling. Clearly, much is at stake when answering these fundamental human questions, and we need all the help we can get to arrive at answers that are good, better, and best. Although we can make do without knowledge, it helps when we are guided aright. To that end, research and theory coming out of the interface of positive psychology and the psychology of religion/spirituality (R/S) holds great promise.

With the existential import of this discussion in mind, we investigate three second-order, philosophical questions that overlay any attempt to integrate theoretically these two (and any other) fields of study (Porter, 2004). First, we have the *logical* question: *can* these fields be integrated? Second, we address the *normative* question: *should* these fields be integrated? And, lastly, we approach the *methodological* question: *how* should these fields be integrated?

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The Logical Question: *Can* These Fields Be Integrated?

Is there a logical relationship between positive psychology and psychology of R/S, such that meaningful theoretical integration is possible? By *meaningful theoretical integration* we have in mind interaction among the two fields' concepts, theories, methodologies, data, and practical implications, with the ultimate aim of increased understanding of human functioning. It is important to highlight that our focus is the *theoretical* integration of ideas from these respective fields and not, for instance, the *clinical* integration of interventions from these two fields. Whereas there are important things to be said about clinical and other forms of applied integration, we are concerned with the prior issue of the interrelationship of ideas. The logic, then, of such integration is quite clear: we need (a) two demarcated fields of study, (b) that are both attempting to make truth-claims about the nature of reality, and (c) the bringing together of which may yield increased understanding. Let us approach these items in turn.

When it comes to (a)—having two clearly demarcated fields of study—psychologists of R/S are attempting to "come to an understanding of the psychological bases of religious belief, experience, and behavior" (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003, p. 377), whereas positive psychology is seeking to come to an understanding of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Given these descriptions, it would be sensible to think that the study of one field would naturally involve the other, because most religions/spiritualities are concerned with questions of human well-being, and contrariwise, investigation into human well-being will eventually have to consider the place of R/S, if any. Despite this overlap, we can sensibly demarcate these two subject matters: one field is primarily attentive to the psychology of human well-being (whether or not that includes R/S), and the other is mainly focused on the psychology of R/S (whether or not that includes notions of human well-being).

Besides having two clearly demarcated fields, we also need to ensure that (b) both subdisciplines are attempting to make truth-claims about a unified reality. The only manner in which the claims of one field can bear logical relations to the claims of another field is if both claims refer to an interconnected reality. Some might balk at the realism assumed in this way of countenancing integration. However, at this juncture, we simply mean to distinguish fields that are attempting to describe a real world from those areas of study that are by definition fictional or antirealist. Although it might be metaphorically rich, for instance, to integrate the Harry Potter series with the study of plate tectonics, the Harry Potter series is a work of fiction that is not attempting to describe the nature of the actual world. Rather, Rowling's books construct a fantasy world, whereas plate tectonics attempts to describe the actual structure of the earth's crust. It is not that the wonderful world of wizardry and the presumably wonderful world of plate tectonics are so far apart. Rather, it is that they are referencing two logically distinct worlds, one of which does not actually exist. Although the fictitious world of Harry Potter might end up providing a

metaphor that aids in real-world plate tectonics, and Rowling's understanding of plate tectonics might make for a great scene in the Harry Potter stories, there would be something illogical about trying to expand our knowledge of, for instance, an earthquake early-warning device by poring over Book Five of the Harry Potter series. Of course, it would not be illogical to do so if we discovered that Rowling had carefully studied plate tectonics and was attempting to advance a theory about earthquake early-warning devices in her otherwise fictional Book Five. But that just shows the point: the only manner in which the claims of one field can be logically related to the claims of another field is if both fields are making claims that refer to a unified reality. Because researchers in both positive psychology and the psychology of R/S put forward claims about actual human persons and their functioning in real life, things look good for there being a logical relation between these two areas of investigation.

And yet, there is another, more vexing assumption of realism in what has been said thus far. Psychologists study agreed-upon *constructs* of human psychological phenomena and, it might be thought, *not* the psychological phenomena themselves. Indeed, on some metaphysical accounts, all that exists is a socially constructed reality with no "real" world beyond agreed-upon conceptualizations (Burr, 2015). If positive psychologists are constructing worlds of hedonic/eudaimonic well-being and psychologists of R/S are constructing worlds of religious and spiritual ideas, experiences, and behavior, how would one determine whether there can be logical relationships between these two socially constructed "realities"?

In response, we distinguish between moderate and radical social constructionism. The latter, which philosophers call "antirealism," is the view that we have no access to the "realities" that our conceptual schemes "refer" to—the "realities" are in fact fictions of our own making. The moderate view maintains that human conceptualizations of the world are socially embedded and, therefore, socially influenced interpretations or models of reality. This way of understanding social constructionism is not antirealist about the nature of reality itself. Rather, the idea is that there exists a mind-independent reality that can be accurately understood and described through human thought and language, to greater and lesser degrees. Moderate social constructionism appreciates the subjective and social nature of the mind–world relationship, while maintaining that claims about reality still have a truth-value. Consequently, logical relations such as deductive entailment, inductive inference, and probabilistic/statistical reasoning are tenable.

A radical social constructionism adds an antirealist ontological claim to this moderate view. The radical social constructionist maintains that there is no mind-independent reality beyond humanly agreed-upon conceptualizations. Social constructions make things what they are in such a way that there is no nonconstructed court of appeals for the truth or falsity of human perspectives about the world (Gergen, 1999). If radical social constructionism is true (although it is difficult to know how we could determine that), then logical relations would be constituted by social agreement as well. If enough participants consented to use language to

discuss these two areas of discourse, then it would be "logical" to do so based on social agreement. In principle, there could be no objection to this move. For the current chapter to proceed on this basis would be for us to try to persuade you, the reader, to join us in thinking about these issues in the manner we do. Because epistemic goods—like truth, understanding, and knowledge—are no longer the goal, we would have to proffer some sort of pragmatic motivation for our call to solidarity (Rorty, 1985). Of course, a problem arises when this pragmatic motivation for social agreement (and/or what is socially agreed upon) requires criticism. If all reality is socially constructed, there is no basis to critique those social constructions of reality that do harm or otherwise fail to achieve agreement.

Fortunately, there is another way to proceed—via embracing moderate social construction alongside a commitment to ontological realism about human psychological phenomena (Boghossian, 2006; Richardson & Guignon, 2008). Although it is essential to appreciate that human knowers are subjectively interpreting reality through culturally embedded and socially influenced interpretive frameworks, that admission does not bar humans from attempting to collect evidence and develop theories that to varying degrees approximate the way people are. On this view, the second condition for integration to be logically possible is secured: (b) both positive psychology and psychology of R/S are making truth claims about reality.

With the first two conditions met, we turn to consider whether the last condition holds: (c) whether the bringing together of the two fields may yield increased understanding of human psychology. First, a word about "bringing together." The simplest way to bring these fields together is for those researching positive psychology to include religious/spiritual concepts and variables in their research and vice versa for psychologists of R/S. Presumably, this strategy will largely consist of testing for interrelationships between features of human well-being (e.g., virtues and positive emotions) and features of human religious/spiritual life (e.g., meditation and perceived experiences of God). Will such testing yield increased understanding of human nature and functioning? Presumably the answer is, yes. Even if there is no statistically significant relationship between positive psychological qualities and religious/spiritual life, that finding itself would be breaking news. Of course, if there are significant correlations, that too would be important. But with these considerations we now will turn from the logical question—*can* we integrate these two fields?—to the normative question, would it be *valuable* to do so?

The Normative Question: *Should* These Fields Be Integrated?

Although we contend there are no logical barriers to the meaningful theoretical integration of positive psychology and psychology of R/S, we now turn to exploring the value of such integration. That we *can* integrate does not mean that we

necessarily *ought* to. Because intradisciplinary integration is a theoretical affair, the normative question is whether such integration will further human understanding in ways that are perceived as value-added.

On this score, there appears much in favor of the integration of positive psychology and R/S and little to say against it. Again, because humans cannot avoid bumping up against issues of human well-being and questions of religious and spiritual significance, understanding the interrelationships between these two domains of life has an immediate appeal. And there is good reason to think that there are important interconnections. For one, many historically situated philosophical and religious/spiritual schools of thought have maintained that there are significant connections between ethics and religious belief, virtue and spiritual practice, human flourishing and religious behavior, and so on (e.g., Hare, 2009). A variety of psychological studies already suggest relevant connections (e.g., Davis et al., 2012; Schnitker et al., 2017; VanderWeele, 2017; Wilkins et al., 2012; for reviews, see Davis et al., Chap. 18, Appendix 18.S2, this volume). It would be of immense benefit if psychological study could help locate reliable and unreliable religious/spiritual paths to virtuous, meaningful lives. And because increasing numbers of people are deidentifying with religion (e.g., Van Tongeren et al., 2021), it would also be helpful to determine how well-being is affected in the absence of religion and/or spirituality.

Beyond the benefits of increased understanding of personal development, there are an array of social ills that have to do with a disconnect between religion/spirituality and human flourishing. For instance, the term "religiously motivated" far too often qualifies things like racism, gender discrimination, homophobia, ethnic cleansing, hate crimes, terrorism, and so on. It is difficult to think of a domain of contemporary life that is more fraught with animosity than moral failures by religious persons and institutions. If the integration of these two areas can help realign religion and justice, that would bring tremendous good (e.g., Palmer & Burgess, 2020).

Although the likelihood of valuable integration looms large, we also need to consider normative reasons against integration. Perhaps one reason is the track record of religion alluded to above. It seems there are far too many cases of religious persons and institutions being on the wrong side of justice. Hunter and Nedelisky (2020) have noted the "epic failure of religion to provide a unifying and peaceable solution to the problems of difference and complexity in the modern world" (p. 212). One might think that given this failure, positive psychology needs to steer clear of religion in order to make progress in conceptualizing and promoting human flourishing. And yet, there is a more complex story to tell about the historical relation of religion to human well-being. Religion has not only perpetuated injustice but also inspired reform movements and helped produce social reformers (Palmer & Burgess, 2020). Rather than neglecting its study, the continued threat of religiously fueled violence and the promise of religiously motivated compassion should lead to prioritizing the study of R/S in relation to human flourishing.

The Methodological Question: *How* Should These Fields Be Integrated?

Having seen that we *can* and *should* bring together the study of positive human qualities and religion/spirituality, our final query is *how* best to do so. Initially, things look rather straightforward in this regard. Seeing that both fields utilize a range of similar quantitative and qualitative methods (see Tsang et al., Chap. 8, this volume), combining research programs should be fairly seamless. In principle, researchers in each field can include the theories, constructs, measures, and data from the other field, with the goal of testing relationships between features of well-being and religious/spiritual life. *Voila*, successful theoretical integration!

The very existence of this volume attests to a more complicated situation. For instance, some have suggested that positive psychology research tends to be more rigorous than R/S research, so for there to be effective integration, there needs to be an increase in the rigor of psychology of R/S (Worthington et al., in press). If that claim is true, the way forward is clear: psychologists of R/S need to up their scholarly game. Yet that is a practical matter, not a philosophical one. Indeed, whatever rigor-related difference exists between the two fields, both disciplines operate within the same social scientific milieu that tends to value randomized controlled experiments as the gold standard (McCall & Green, 2004). How closely each field's research designs measure up to that standard is itself an empirical question.

However, lingering in the background of this discussion, there is a philosophical question about method that is relevant to these fields' integrative potential. The question can be put like this: Why think features of hedonic/eudaimonic well-being and religious/spiritual life are adequately captured by the empirical methods of psychology, particularly quantitative-statistical methods? Obviously, this question is a skeptical one (as philosophers are wont to do), and it may seem like it is headed in the wrong direction for a volume defending the integration of positive psychology and R/S. Although the question is skeptical, our suggested way forward is constructive. One answer to how we might best integrate these two subfields is to encourage an integrative methodology that goes beyond narrowly empirical sources/methods and includes nonquantitative sources/methods, in order to capture more of the irreducible nature of the phenomena in question. In what follows, we first propose an integrative methodology and then turn to several considerations in its favor.

The Nature of Methodological Pluralism

The integrative approach we have in mind—what has been called methodological pluralism (Roth, 1987; cf. Gantt & Melling, 2009; Slife & Reber, 2021)—might be thought of as a broaden-and-build epistemology that allows premises from philosophy, religious/spiritual traditions, phenomenological experience, and other nonquantitative sources into the evidence base, alongside quantitative-statistical

findings. Obviously, this is a more radical sort of mixed-methods approach that goes beyond the call for the more frequent use of qualitative methods (e.g., Davis et al., 2016; Gergen et al., 2015).

To be clear, our call for methodological pluralism is consistent with the desire for more rigor in research. Psychology should do empirical science as rigorously as possible. It is just that psychology should also do *scientia* as rigorously as possible. The Latin *scientia* signals a premodern view of knowledge in which evidence from philosophy, religion, historical traditions, phenomenological experience, and the like entered rational investigation, alongside quantitative evidence. Ours is a call for positive psychologists and psychologists of R/S to take this broader expanse of evidence into consideration when coming to their conclusions, in the same manner that at least some philosophers and religious scholars take on board the empirical evidence of the sciences when coming to their philosophical and religious conclusions. Our proposal then for how best to integrate positive psychology and psychology of R/S is to be even more integratively inclusive and move towards *inter* or even *trans*-disciplinary integration (McGrath, 2019). This would involve looking to virtue ethics, moral philosophy, existentialism, Aristotelianism, Confucianism, Thomism, personalism, Darwinism, phenomenology, analytic theology, Buddhist thought, Jewish theology, Islamic theology, Hindu theology, Christian theology, religious studies, philosophical naturalism, and so on. Again, these perspectives would be consulted not only in conceptualizing the phenomena to be studied (generating meaningful research questions and testable hypotheses) but also in interrogating the empirical results.

In this effort, we heed the call of Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) who recommended a "multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm" (p. 395) for research in the psychology of R/S. They argued: "A single disciplinary approach is incapable of yielding comprehensive knowledge of phenomena as complex and multifaceted as spirituality" (p. 395). Building off this claim, Belzen and Hood (2006) proposed that a multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm "cannot be achieved without acceptance of…methodological pluralism" (p. 6). They identified three major types of methods. The first type includes the familiar quantitative-statistical methods of psychology. The second type "includes research methods from a broader social-scientific range" (Belzen & Hood, 2006, p. 10), such as qualitative interviews, ethnographies, and biographical analysis. The third type "relies heavily on data and insights from disciplines like history, theology, literature, and cultural studies" (Belzen & Hood, 2006, p. 10). Although Belzen and Hood (2006) acknowledged that many topics in psychology can get along well with using the first type of research methodology alone, they contended that the personal nature of R/S (and we would add hedonic/eudaimonic well-being) require the second and third types of methods as well.

An openness to methodological pluralism can be found within positive psychology as well. Schnitker and Emmons (2017) have argued that researchers from positive psychology "have neglected to fully engage theological and philosophical perspectives throughout the research process" (p. 239). They envision fostering "cross-disciplinary conversation that engages current scholarship in psychology of religion and spirituality, positive psychology, theology, and philosophy"

(pp. 239–240). Similarly, Rich (2017) has called for positive psychology to embrace a broad range of qualitative and interdisciplinary methods that are "by nature more open and pluralistic than the quantitative approach associated with logical positivism" (p. 229). Lomas et al. (2020) have forecasted a coming "third wave" of positive psychology that involves an "epistemological broadening" (p. 1) that "goes beyond the boundaries of psychology to incorporate knowledge and research methodologies from a broad range of fields" (p. 11).

In championing methodological pluralism, our negative concern is with *methodological exclusivism*. By methodological exclusivism, we mean the tendency to exclude sources of knowledge that do not meet the standards of the quantitative-statistical methods. Rich (2017) has gotten at the spirit of this sort of exclusivism in his encouragement to psychological researchers to be "vigilant against any sort of 'physics envy' in which they mistakenly feel that using numeric data and quantitative methods in itself makes them more 'scientific'" (p. 222; cf. Friedman & Brown, 2018). Below we contend that this exclusivism is driven, in part, by a lingering hangover from twentieth century logical positivism as well as the cultural authority that is found in some settings by hewing to the experimental protocols of the natural sciences (that is, scientism; see Nelson & Canty, Chap. 2, this volume). Richardson and Guignon (2008) have argued that positive psychology problematically assumes scientism, and they instead have recommended thinking of positive psychology as an "*interpretive* social science rather than an aggressively 'scientific' and heavily instrumental one" (p. 623). They have suggested: "An interpretive psychology would draw on a wider array of methods or approaches to understanding," including "[c]ultural history, theoretical and philosophical analysis, some degree of cultural and political engagement, spiritual experiences and disciplines, to mention just a few, along with varied forms of quantitative and qualitative research" (p. 623).

Our point is not to generate skepticism regarding quantitative-statistical methodologies but rather to point out the epistemic inadequacy of such methodologies alone. People filter scientific findings through their personal experience, family history, cultural traditions, philosophical points of view, religious/spiritual outlooks, and political commitments. "There must be something wrong with the study" or "This research must be biased" are tempting and all-too-frequent responses when the proclaimed results of a study do not match up with what people deeply feel or have reasons to believe true. "We believe in science," says the popular poster, but many people do not believe in *scientism*, where *scientism* refers to the view that science-backed findings are the only source of knowledge and/or automatically override any other claims to knowledge. This latent skepticism is particularly at play when it comes to positive psychology and psychology of R/S, given how central human well-being and R/S are to personal experience and to culturally embedded traditions. Doubts over quantitative-statistical findings can be soothed when they are considered alongside evidence from philosophy, religion, history, and phenomenological investigation. Drawing off this broader evidence-base can provide confirmation, explanation, elaboration, and/or qualification of the empirical results.

There are at least two ways such interdisciplinary integration might unfold. First, the researcher might allow philosophical, religious, and spiritual premises into their evidence base and argumentation. This is to do research from an explicit point-of-view, which many have argued is inescapable (see Gantt & Melling, 2009). The philosophical naturalist, the Ignatian, the Zen Buddhist, the humanist, the Aristotelian, the Confucian, and so on announce that their research is being conducted based on certain principles from those traditions, both in the conceptualization of the study and in the evaluation of the empirical results. The second integrative route is for the researcher to bracket any explicit point-of-view and hypothetically consider additional sources of evidence in the discussion of the empirical results. For instance, a study that shows that mindfulness practices decrease anxiety can be interrogated from the perspectives of Zen Buddhism, contemplative Christianity, and philosophical naturalism. The value here is to consider the interpretations, objections, and affirmations of one or more salient perspectives. The researcher can discuss these matters hypothetically: *if* one is a Zen Buddhist, one will likely respond in such-a-such way, but *if* one is a philosophical naturalist, one will likely respond in this other manner. On either route, the empirical findings are not presented either in an epistemological vacuum or within a presumed secular frame (Taylor, 2007).

Four Considerations in Favor of Methodological Pluralism

Having described methodological pluralism, we propose four considerations in its favor. The first is a reminder that, within contemporary psychology, any tendency to privilege quantitative-statistical methods at the exclusion of nonquantitative approaches is unwarranted (Nelson & Slife, 2012). Many have argued that the social sciences tended towards a methodological unity with the natural sciences in part due to the historical rise (in the 1920s and 1930s) of what came to be known as "logical positivism" championed by a group of philosophers referred to as the Vienna Circle (Gergen et al., 2015; Nelson, 2006; Robinson, 1995; Toulmin & Leary, 1985). For instance, a series of eight monographs entitled "Unified Science" were written by those associated with the Vienna Circle. Each volume sought to extend the quantitative experimental designs of the natural sciences to the social sciences. The first volume, written in 1932 by Otto Neurath, was titled "Unified Science and Psychology" (Sorell, 1994, pp. 12–13). This attempt to unify experimental methods was rooted in logical positivism's "verificationism." The principle of verificationism stated roughly that "all statements are either analytic (and thus tautological), empirical (and thus verified by observation), or meaningless" (Toulmin & Leary, 1985, p. 603). Because the natural sciences possessed the most stringent methods of controlled observation, the developing social sciences adopted those methods to avoid meaninglessness. Even though logical positivism and its verificationist criterion were eventually subjected to serious critique, Roth (1987) has noted the social

sciences "have retained a fundamentally positivistic conception of knowledge, a conception that identifies knowledge with the results of natural science" (p. 116), and Nelson (2006) has claimed that logical positivism became the "de-facto epistemology for psychology" (p. 210; cf. Sorrell, 1994).

This lingering adherence to a defunct positivism (and the scientism it funds) is unwarranted. It bears reminder there were at least three crucial problems that led to the demise of verificationism. First, moral statements—such as, "racism is wrong" or "honesty in research is good"—are unverifiable by sense experience and therefore rendered meaningless (Willard et al., 2018). It is absurd to maintain that calls for racial justice and honest reporting of data are meaningless emotional pleas, and such a view undermines the values needed for a functional science. Second, various notions required for science—such as causation, universal generalizations, and atomic/subatomic particles—were themselves unverifiable. The verifiability principle undermined core elements of the empirical science that positivists meant to uphold (Misak, 1995). The third problem was that logical positivism's verificationist criterion could not itself be empirically verified. The proposition that "only propositions that are logically true or can be verified by empirical facts should count as meaningful" is not itself logically true nor can it be verified by empirical facts. Indeed, the claim itself is not an empirical claim but a universal claim about what makes statements meaningful (Plantinga, 2018). According to the verificationist criterion, the criterion itself is meaningless. No doubt empirical verification is an important source of evidence (and quantitative-statistical methods are one way to provide such evidence), but to maintain that it is the only valid source of evidence is unjustifiable.

A second consideration in favor of looking beyond quantitative-statistical methods is that showing the reliability of these methods depends on nonquantitative arguments. For instance, the existence of mind-independent reality, the notion that language refers to reality, the identification of standards of a good theory, the reliability of sense-perception, memory, testimony, and rational intuition are each foundational to trusting quantitative-statistical methods, yet these matters cannot be determined by those methods (De Haro, 2020). Other forms of investigation, such as conceptual analysis, phenomenological experience, rational intuition, and principles of evidential reasoning are required. As De Haro (2020) has concluded: "The scientific quest presupposes having a number of philosophical issues settled first: or, at least, it presupposes engaging with the various conceptual options, and taking a stance on them" (p. 310).

A third consideration in favor of a methodological pluralism emerges from the distinction between etic and emic research (Pike, 1967). Etic research utilizes more distal constructs that are generalizable across multiple contexts, whereas emic research is a more proximal approach that takes an insider, tradition-specific perspective (Hall et al., 2018). Watson et al. (2011) have argued that both etic and emic approaches are necessary in the psychology of R/S, with emic research lending greater cultural validity. Cultural validity would certainly be an instrumental good of emic methods, but presumably emic research is likely to have greater cultural

acceptance because it is paying attention to the broader evidential base that is already accepted within its context of study. This broader and contextualized evidential base is data in the sense of the Latin *datum*, that which is "given." Emic researchers can take seriously what counts as legitimate sources of evidence within their research context, thereby providing additional indicators of unobservable constructs and additional explanatory evidence for connections between variables. One reason to take the evidential base of one's research context seriously is that it opens up the possibility of deeper contextualized understanding of the phenomena in question. Another reason is that, within that context, there may be evidence that is relevant to the quantitative-statistical results. And yet, why provisionally trust the evidence that is culturally accepted within a social setting? For one thing, to do otherwise would be to privilege the agreed-upon evidential sources within the researcher's context, and unless there is good reason to do so, this privileging is arbitrary. Second, although contextualized systems of thought can be horribly wrong, there is some reason to think that living, historically situated traditions have stood the test of time for good reason. This leads us to the last consideration in favor of methodological pluralism.

Living religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions are embodied ways of life that ideally refine practical wisdom over time. McDowell (1996) has characterized a tradition as "a store of historically accumulated wisdom about what is a reason for what" (p. 126). In the context of discussing traditions, McDowell (1996) noted that the rise of modern individualism

> brings with it a loss or devaluation of the idea that immersion in a tradition might be a respectable mode of access to the real. Instead it comes to seem incumbent on each individual thinker to check everything for herself. When particular traditions seem ossified or hidebound, that encourages a fantasy that one should discard reliance on tradition altogether, whereas the right response would be to insist that a respectable tradition must include an honest responsiveness to reflective criticism. (pp. 98–99)

MacIntyre (1984)—a well-known proponent of this idea—has contended that a "living" tradition is "an historically extended, socially embodied argument" (p. 222) in which traditions are refined over time through interaction with people within and outside the tradition. Although MacIntyrean notions of tradition-dependent rationality and incommensurability seem to go too far, it remains true that human moral and religious lives are embedded in lived, culturally situated traditions (Hill & Hall, 2018). Methodological pluralism is built into communities of practice, which are subject to internal refinement such that "immersion in a tradition might be a respectable mode of access to the real" (McDowell, 1996, p. 89).

Acknowledging the reality of the social embeddedness of human moral and religious/spiritual life (and the potential for internal correction) does not on its own offer a reason to think these historically situated traditions accurately conceptualize the good life and the good person. However, it does make it plausible to think that they offer a coherent narrative of the world that is, to varying degrees, in touch with reality. The refined narratives within these traditions offer accounts of the interrelationships among beliefs, practices, virtues, and ultimate

purpose. This provides space for positive psychology and the psychology of R/S to engage jointly and meaningfully with religious and philosophical traditions as important interlocutors, attending to what is "given" within those traditions—on those traditions' own terms. A helpful analogy is that of a crime scene investigator who takes in eyewitness testimony, footage from nearby security cameras, footprints at the scene, psychological profiles, DNA evidence, and even the local psychic. The investigator does not lay aside their own evaluative and methodological filters, but they are willing to countenance purported evidence from sources that they may later find good reason to overturn. So, this is not the metaphysical claim that one can only make sense of human well-being and religious/spiritual life from within a particular tradition. Rather, it is the epistemological claim that there are sources of evidence available from within particular traditions that are neglected unless methodological pluralism is embraced intentionally and practiced meaningfully.

Conclusion

What if humanity is not on the verge of apocalypse but instead moral and religious/spiritual breakthrough? Indeed, perhaps we are on the verge of such a breakthrough in part because we are on the verge of apocalypse. As Camus' *The Plague* illustrates, there is nothing like the inevitable demise of humanity to get humanity's attention. When death and disaster loom, possibilities of otherworldly transcendence and this-worldly well-being are piqued. Specifically, what if we are on the verge of a moral and religious/spiritual breakthrough that requires the integrated resources of positive psychology, the psychology of R/S, and additional evidential resources found within philosophical, religious, and spiritual traditions? One early proponent of a pluralist method, William James (1909), wrote: "Let empiricism once become associated with religion, as hitherto, through some strange misunderstanding, it has been associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion as well as of philosophy will be ready to begin" (p. 314).

MacIntyre (1984) famously ended *After Virtue* with these lines: "We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict" (p. 255). If McIntyre is right that we need communities like St. Benedict's to help structure our moral and religious/spiritual lives, perhaps we also need those communities to understand properly the relationship between R/S and human well-being. If so, alongside another St. Benedict, perhaps we also wait for another—doubtless very different—William James.

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